



## King County

### Metropolitan King County Council Growth Management and Natural Resources Committee

**Agenda Item No.:** 2 **Date:** March 18, 2008

**Briefing No.:** 2008-B0057 **Prepared by:** Kendall Moore  
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**Attending:** Bob Burns, DNRP  
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#### REVISED

*(substantive revisions shown in italics and underlining)*

#### **SUBJECT**

Briefing on Executive's 2008 recommended amendments to King County Comprehensive Plan ("KCCP"), Chapter 6 – Parks, Open Space, and Natural Resources. This Chapter sets out the policy framework for programs and services which both preserve and expand: (1) the regional open space system of parks, trails, natural areas, (2) working resource lands, (3) local parks, and (4) cultural resources including public art and historic landmarks.

#### **SYNOPSIS OF KEY ISSUES**

While most of the changes to the section on Parks, Recreation and Open Space present no issues; there are five items, which staff believe the Council should consider. These five items entail:

- the role of the County in providing parks in the rural area
- the equitable distribution of regional parks
- the consideration of equity to eliminate health disparities as part of the County's open space and trail system
- how funding dictates the purpose of the park, trail, or open space
- broadening the category of tribes with which it will partner with to include those not federally recognized.

Additionally, in the section on Cultural Resources, the lack of reference to any equity policy poses a series of questions regarding the import of FW-104<sup>1</sup>, including:

- whether the lack of an equity in Cultural Resources Section of chapter 6 was intentional
- whether selectively including equity policies within some of the sections of various topical chapters undercuts the impact of FW 104 as a framework policy
- whether the selective inclusion of equity policies was intended to emphasize certain policy sections over others; that is - where any additional equity policies have been proposed in the topical chapters, are they intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive.

## **1. Local Parks Policy**

**2008 Proposed Comprehensive Plan at page 6-3:**

**P-103      King County shall provide ((L))local parks, trails and other open spaces that complement the regional system ((should be provided)) in each community((,)) in Rural Areas, to enhance environmental and visual quality and meet local recreation needs. ((King County shall provide local parks, trails and other open spaces in the Rural Area.)) These vital parks, trails, recreational facilities and natural resources contribute to the physical, mental and emotional well-being of county residents.**

This is the current version of the Executive's proposed amended language in policy P-103, which in effect states that King County shall provide local parks that complement the regional system but eliminates language that states that King County **shall** provide local parks, trails and other open spaces in the Rural Area. This is a shift from current Park policy as established in the Park's Omnibus Ordinance<sup>2</sup>, and is contrary to the County's recognized role as the local service provider in the Rural Area.<sup>3</sup>

As proposed, this policy could be interpreted to eliminate the County's obligation to provide for local parks, trails and open spaces in the Rural Area if they do not complement a regional system. Additionally, the word "complement" is subjective and the Executive has not transmitted any guidelines by which the Parks Division would determine if a local park, trail or open space complements the regional system or

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<sup>1</sup> "King County will evaluate land use policies, programs, and practices through an equity and social justice lens to help in the reduction of health disparities and directly address issues of environmental justice."

<sup>2</sup> See Section 1 to Ordinance 14509: "4.The County's role in local parks and recreation should be limited and focused primarily on rural areas."

<sup>3</sup> F-104, at page 8-2: "King County will, in cooperation with special purpose districts and/or local service providers, continue to plan for and provide public services to the Rural Area, consistent with rural standards and needs." See also current Park's Business Transition Plan: Phase II Report (2002) at page 11: "The County's local parks and recreation role should be limited, **and focused primarily on the rural areas where there is no existing or anticipated alternate service provider.**" (Emphasis added.)

merely is a local, rural park, trail or open space. The Executive has not developed written criteria for determining whether a local park complements the regional system.

Based on the concerns raised in discussions with Executive staff, on Monday, the Executive has proposed to revert back to the original language of P-103, restoring the local parks sentence but also adding the last new sentence found in the current proposed version. The Executive is now proposing:

**P-103            Local parks, trails and other open spaces that complement the regional system should be provided in each community((;)) in Rural Areas, to enhance environmental and visual quality and meet local recreation needs. King County shall provide local parks, trails and other open spaces in the Rural Area. These vital parks, trails, recreational facilities and natural resources contribute to the physical, mental and emotional well-being of county residents.**

## **2. Equity**

### **2008 Proposed Comprehensive Plan at page 6-4**

**P-105            King County shall provide regional parks and recreational facilities that serve users from many neighborhoods and communities. Regional parks include unique sites and facilities that ~~((should be))~~ are equitably distributed.**

The Executive's proposed amended language in policy P-105 states that King County's Regional parks are equitably distributed. Staff has requested clarification from the Executive on whether this policy was an attempt to state that King County's regional parks are already equitably distributed; and if so, what criteria was used to make this determination. A review of the Executive's map of County's parks, trails and open space reveals that they are not distributed in relationship to the County's population or spread equally over the County's geography. They are predominately located in the central and north portions of the Rural Area. Please refer to map located at the end of chapter 6 in Book 1 of the Executive's Recommended 2008 Comprehensive Plan.

### **2008 Proposed Comprehensive Plan Page 6-6**

**P-128a            King County shall consider equity as part of its open space and trail system to help in the reduction of health disparities.**

The Executive's proposed new language in policy P-128a states that King County shall consider equity as part of its open space and trail system to help reduce health disparities. This new language is aligned with the recommendations in the 2006 Report on the Health of King County, and the policy of the Parks Expansion Levy which requires King County to acquire and develop regional trails, with primary consideration given to those projects that address health disparities/health inequities. However, staff has requested clarification from the Executive regarding whether health equity

considerations were intended to include only open space and trail systems and exclude local and regional parks systems. **According to Executive staff, “parks” was inadvertently left out of this policy.**

However, how this policy shall be implemented has not been clarified. The final concern regarding this policy is that it limits the equity consideration to only health disparities and does not include “economic justice” as posited by proposed FW -104.

### **3. Funding**

#### **2008 Proposed Comprehensive Plan Page 6-7**

**P-XXX      Funding and development of parks, trails and open space sites should be consistent with the purposes of their acquisition and in consideration of their funding sources.**

The Executive’s proposed new language in policy P-XXX states that the source of funding should be consistent with the purpose of the parks, trails and open space site acquisition. This policy is aligned with existing practices, as the County acts to limit its liability by adhering to the restrictions associated with various revenue sources when acquiring, developing or divesting of real property.

### **4. Recognition of Tribes**

#### **2008 Proposed Comprehensive Plan Page 6-7**

**P-121      King County shall be a leader in establishing partnerships with cities, adjacent counties, ((federally recognized)) tribes, state and federal agencies, school and special purpose districts, community organizations, nonprofit organizations, land owners and other citizens. The county and these partnerships should work to promote and protect all aspects of environmental quality and complete the regional parks and open space system, linking local and regional lands and facilities.**

The Executive’s proposed amended language in policy P-121 states that the King County shall be leader in establishing partnerships with numerous agencies and organizations including tribes. This differs from the 2004 Comprehensive Plan in that the qualifier “**federally recognized**” in front of the word “tribe” has been proposed for removal. Executive staff report that this change is recommended so as not to exclude those tribes that have not been federally recognized. There are eight tribes in the state of Washington, which have petitioned for, but have yet to receive, federal recognition. They include:

- Mitchell Bay Band
- Snoqualmoo Tribe of Whidbey Island, petitioned 4/15/80,

- Duwamish Indian Tribe, petitioned 6/7/77
- Steilacoom Tribe, petitioned 8/28/73
- Chinook Indian Tribe, Inc., petitioned 7/23/79
- Snohomish Tribe of Indians, petitioned 3/3/75
- Noo-Wha-Ha Band
- Cowlitz Tribe of Indians, petitioned 9/17/75

## **5. Regional Trail System Priorities**

Chapter 6 includes a Regional trail system priority list from 2007. The priority list does not appear to include any significant changes. The Eastside BNSF Trail is included on the list but is not prioritized. Of note is the list of Regional trail prioritization criteria, which includes three tiers:

*1<sup>st</sup> Tier Priority - connectivity, aesthetic/scenic value, timing/relationship with other projects, public support, urban/rural centers connections*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Tier Priority - projects underway in design/construction/permitting phase, continuity of development*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Tier Priority - continuity of trail corridor development.*

The tiered prioritization criteria above do not appear to include elements that would address health or social equity.

However, as discussed above, the issue presented by this omission is what the role of the equity framework policy has. In other words, does every management mechanism (in this case prioritizing the County's trails, open space and parks) need to have the equity component included or is that the purpose of a framework policy? If it is the latter, does calling out equity in limited areas undercut the import of framework policy? If the purpose is to "illustrate" equity policy in specific sections of the Comprehensive Plan, then text should be included that any topical equity policy is illustrative of the overall equity framework policy. In such a case how the individual equity policy is to be implemented should be indicated.

## **Functional Plans**

The Council adopted the Parks and Recreation Business Plan in 2002. A three-year maintenance and operations levy was approved by the voters in 2004. Voters have since approved two new six-year parks levies to support maintenance, operations and expansion of the Regional Trail system. Despite significant changes in revenue and programmatic objectives, the Parks Division has not proposed an update to the 2002 Business Plan for consideration with the proposed changes to Parks' policy proposed in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan Update.

## **Cultural Resources**

There are no substantive changes to the Cultural Resources section of Chapter 6.<sup>4</sup>

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

None

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<sup>4</sup> The only change to the Cultural Resources Section was including the name Cultural Development Authority for the acronym CDA.